

DERIVATION TIME OF COLLOQUIAL MIN FROM ARCHAIC CHINESE*

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In the field of Chinese historical phonology, dialectal material has been utilized chiefly for the reconstruction of Ancient Chinese (from about A.D. 600), but rather rarely for the reconstruction of Archaic Chinese, the language of roughly the first millennium B.C. The reason for this is quite clear, because most dialects derived from the main stream of the Chinese language after the sixth century, and phonological changes of these dialects can be well explained by the system of Ancient Chinese. The only exception is colloquial Min which had definitely branched off before the period of Ancient Chinese, but the exact time has not been determined. It is the purpose of this paper to clarify this point.

It is well known that the Min dialects have two coexisting phonological systems, i.e., colloquial vs. literary. Both systems preserve older features which represent undetermined early periods. Professor Tung Tung-ho (1960: 1016-18, 1041) pointed out ten types of phenomena in the Southern Min initials of this kind, which for example preserve the archaic features of a lack of distinction between bilabials and labio-dentals, a lack of distinction between dentals and supradentals, etc. Regarding this, Professor Tung said:

"It seems that we can only assume that there were two phonological systems in the history of the Southern Min dialects: one is relatively close to the Ancient Chinese; and the other one is rather different... As to which of the two systems is earlier than the other, and/or whether there existed a third system, is hard to state for the time being. We may eventually answer these questions after we make a

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thorough study of the history of the Southern Min dialects and the cultural background of this area.”

We can clearly see that what Tung emphasized is the phonological system of the Southern Min dialects, not only fragmentary phenomena. Thus his statement is very cautious. Yüan Chia-hua (1960: 240) also pointed out similar phonological characteristics, but his suggestion is somewhat too simple:

“We may say that the Min dialects directly inherited the initial system of Archaic Chinese; it did not undergo the phonetic changes which took place in the Ancient period.”

Recent studies have provided more reliable information. Sung (1973: 426) assumed that colloquial Amoy, a widespread dialect of the Southern Min, might have been carried from Northern China into the Southern Min area before the period of the *Ch'ieh-yün* (A.D. 601), and literary Amoy, about the time of the *Ch'ieh-yün*. After examining the migration history of the Min people from the north, and analyzing some triple readings in Amoy and other Min dialects, Norman (1979: 271) suggested that the Min dialects are comprised of three important lexical strata. The oldest lexical stratum was introduced into the Min area during the Han dynasty (206B.C.-A.D. 220), the second stratum represents the language of the late Southern Dynasties (ab. A.D.600), and the third one probably represents the standard literary language of the late T'ang Dynasty (ab. A.D.900). Although there are only a few readings belonging to the second stratum, Norman's conclusion is probably correct. The first and the third strata are known as colloquial Min and literary Min respectively. Yang (1982) devoted her study to the very problem of colloquial and literary Min. She systematically differentiated all the readings of the four Southern Min dialects, and to some extent, set up a clear boundary between colloquial and literary. In accordance with Tung's viewpoint, this investigation of whole strata is more important than the analysis of individual readings.

Literary Min will not be discussed here (cf. Yang 1982), for my main concern is to determine the derivation time of colloquial Min. I stated elsewhere (Ting 1979:718) that colloquial Min branched off from Archaic Chinese at least by sometime during the Han dynasty. This rough statement

coincides with Norman's suggestion mentioned above. (Cf. also Bodman 1983:2). But my approach is quite different from his. I propose to examine all the phonological characteristics of colloquial Min on the scale of Chinese historical phonology. Furthermore, as the Han dynasty extended for more than four hundred years, from 206 B.C. to A.D. 220, it would be meaningful to determine the approximate time when colloquial Min branched off.

- 1) No distinction between the Late Ancient Chinese bilabials and labio-dentals (Lo 1930: 56)¹

The bilabial and labio-dental initials of late Ancient Chinese are not distinct in any of the Min dialects. For example:

Late Anc. C.	Min	Characters and Glosses
幫 *p-	p-	兵 "soldier", 布 "cloth"
非 *f-/pf-	p-	飛 "to fly", 分 "to divide", 放 "to put", 腹 "stomack"
滂 *p'-	p'-	普 "popular", 屁 "fart"
敷 *f'-/pf'-	p'-	麸 "bran", 蜂 "bee"
並 *b-	{p- p'-}	平 "level", 病 "sickness" 皮 "skin", 曝 "to sun"
奉 *v-/bv-	{p- p'-}	肥 "fat", 房 "house", 飯 "rice" 浮 "to float", 縫 "seam"

It has been proved that the split of labials, for instance, from *p- to p- and f-, occurred at the end of the T'ang dynasty. Professor Lo Ch'ang-p'ei (1931: 254-255) found out that although the labio-dental initials were not listed in the so-called "Thirty Characters" representing Ancient Chinese initials, they formed a uniform sound class in the *Kuei San-shih Tzu-mu Li* (Examples for the Thirty Initials), a T'ang manuscript discovered in Tun-huang. Also, in a fragmentary work of Shou Wen, a T'ang monk, there were one hundred and fifty-three characters with the initials f-/pf- and f'/pf'- listed in one section, in which it is stated that these two initials are similar but different. However, there is not a trace of labio-dental initials in the *Ch'ieh-yün*. Thus the fact that the Min dialects do not have labio-dentals does not demonstrate any particular time before Ancient Chinese when the Min dialects might have branched off.

1. The same phenomenon sometimes has been pointed out by many scholars, in this paper I have only referred to the first one.

- 2) No distinction between the Ancient Chinese dentals and supradentals (Lo 1930: 56).

This phenomenon is also shared by all of the Min dialects. Ancient Chinese dental and supradental stops were not distinct in Archaic Chinese. For example:

Anc. C.	Min	Characters and Glosses
端 *t- ²	t-	刀 “knife”, 底 “bottom”, 答 “to answer”
知 *t-	t-	猪 “pig”, 漲 “to rise as water”, 桌 “table”
透 *th-	t'-	天 “heaven”, 跳 “to jump”, 塔 “pagoda”
徹 *th-	t'-	趁 “to take advantage of”, 拆 “to tear open”
定 *d-	{t- t'-}	條 “strip”, 豆 “bean”, 毒 “poison” 頭 “head”, 糖 “sugar”, 讀 “to read”
澄 *d-	{t- t'-}	茶 “tea”, 丈 “ten feet”, 直 “stright” 蟲 “worm”, 柱 “pillar”, 宅 “dwelling”

Professor Li Fang Kuei (1971: 11) reconstructed *tr- *thr- and *dr- in his system of Archaic Chinese for the Ancient Chinese supradentals t-, th- and d- respectively. Coblin (1974-75, 1977-78, 1978) thoroughly studied the phonological glosses of the Wei-Chin and the Eastern Han periods, and the *Shuowen Tujuo* glosses of Hsü Shen (A.D. 30-124), and found that the initials *tr-, *thr- and *dr- remained unchanged in the Wei-Chin period (A.D. 220-420). In my own study (Ting 1975: 258) of the Wei-Chin finals, I also made the conclusion that the medial -r- persisted from Archaic Chinese to the Wei-Chin period and began to drop out later on. Therefore, the pronunciations of t- and t'- for the Ancient Chinese supradentals in the Min dialects reflect an older phenomenon before the *Ch'ieh-yün*'s time, but do not point to a definite period.

- 3) No distinction between Ancient Chinese dental affricates, supradental affricates and palatals³ (Lo 1930: 56)

The Min dialects do not distinguish three sets of Ancient Chinese affricates and fricatives. In other words, *ts-, *tsh-, *s-; *tʃs- *tʃsh-, *ʃs-; and *tʃs-, *tʃsh-, *ʃs- are all pronounced as the sibilants ts-, ts'- and

2. In this paper, I follow Li's (1971: 5) revised system of Ancient Chinese.

3. In terms of Chinese phonology, the dental affricates are the *ching* series 精系, the supradental affricates are the *chao erh* series 照二, and the palatals are *chao san* 照三. According to Lung's theory (Lung 1981), the difference between the *chao erh* and *chao san* series is not the initials but the medials. But I have reservations about his conclusion.

s-, with a set of phonetic variants, tś-, tś'- and ś-, before the vowel -i. Because the readings of these words are not always identical in different dialects, let us take the Amoy fricatives as an example:

Anc. C.	Min	Characters and Glosses
心 *s-	{ s-	私 "private", 嫂 "sister-in-law",
	{ ś-	索 "cord" 箱 "box", 死 "to die", 削 "to cut"
審二 *ʃ-	{ s-	師 "teacher", 駛 "to drive", 蝨 "louse"
	{ ś-	雙 "pair", 滲 "to soak through", 澀 "harsh"
審三 *ś-	{ s-	尿 "excrement", 稅 "tax", 說 "to talk"
	{ ś-	燒 "to burn", 扇 "fan", 式 "shape"

Professor Tung (1960: 1018) noticed this and pointed out that this is a common change with regard to the other dialects in the south. In the Archaic Chinese system, Professor Li (1971: 8-12) reconstructed *ts-, *tsh-..., *tsr-, *tshr-..., and *tj-, *thj-... for Ancient Chinese *ts-, *tsh-..., *ʃs-, *ʃsh-..., and *tś-, *tśh- respectively. It would be reasonable either to consider the Min readings to be reflexes of Archaic Chinese sibilants, which merged with the set of *tj-, *thj- etc. in a later stage, or to regard the Min readings as a merger of three sets of initials from Ancient Chinese. So this phenomenon does not provide any help in tracing the derivation time of colloquial Min.

- 4) Voiced stops in Ancient Chinese are mostly pronounced in the Min dialects as unaspirated voiceless stops and partly as aspirated ones (Lo 1930: 56)

The lost of voicing in the voiced stops is a general tendency in most of the Chinese dialects including Min. But the Min dialects manifest a special change, for which no phonological conditioning can be found. Examples for Ancient Chinese initials *d- and *ɖ- were listed above, some examples of the initial *g- will be given here:

Anc. C.	Min	Characters and Glosses
羣 *g-	{ k-	窮 "poor", 舊 "old", 局 "bureau"
	{ k'-	騎 "to ride", 臼 "mortar"

This unconditioned split cannot be explained on the basis of the Ancient Chinese system, which has only one voiced oral stop at each reconstructed point of articulation. In the system of Archaic Chinese, we encounter the same problem, unless we reconstruct two types of voiced stops, such as *b- and *bh-, and *d- and *dh-, etc. Norman

(1973: 224-225) reconstructed not only *b- and *bh-, but also a set of softened stops in his Proto-Min system in order to solve this difficulty. I have some reservations on this point. Even if we reconstruct two types of voiced stops, we still cannot determine at what stage between Archaic and Ancient Chinese these stops might have merged.

- 5) Some words with Ancient Chinese *ŋ- initials are pronounced as h- in the Min dialects (Tung 1960: 1017)

This phenomenon only occurs in some Southern Min dialects. Let us take Amoy as an example:

Anc. C.	Amoy	Fu-chou	Characters and Glosses
*ŋ-	g-	ŋ-	芽 "sprout", 五 "five", 鵞 "goose"
疑 *ŋ-	h-	ŋ-	魚 "fish", 瓦 "tile", 艾 "mugwort",
			蟻 "ant", 硯 "ink-stone", 岸 "river-bank", 額 "forehead"

All these words are pronounced with an initial ŋ- in colloquial Fu-chou. If we regard the correspondence, Anc. C. *ŋ-: Amoy g-: Fu-chou ŋ-, as regular and reconstruct *ŋ- for it, we have to seek a reliable explanation for the irregular correspondence, Anc. C. *ŋ-: Amoy h-: Fu-chou ŋ-. One important point is that these words all belong to the lower register (or the tone-type *yang* 陽調), for which a voiced initial should be posited. If we reconstruct a voiceless ŋ- [ŋ̥] for the Amoy h-, it would be difficult to explain the tones. In Proto-Min, Norman (1973: 236) postulated *ŋh- for 艾, 硯 and 額, because 艾 and 硯 belong to the upper register (or the tone-type *yin* 陰調) in Fu-chou. The word 額 does not belong to the upper register in Fu-chou, so he used Shao-wu as evidence instead. I think that Shao-wu is probably a dialectal mixture of Min and Hakka, and it would be problematic if it is used in reconstructing Proto-Min. (Cf. Ting 1982: 266). Another point is that the other words 魚, 瓦, 蟻 and 岸 all have the initial h- in Amoy, but belong to the lower register in Fu-chou. No matter whether we reconstruct these words as *ŋh- or as *ŋ-, both would be problematic. In the end, we still cannot solve this problem, and it does not give any hint as to the derivation time of colloquial Min.

- 6) A part of the Ancient Chinese *l- initials are pronounced as s- in the Min dialects (Mei and Norman 1971)

The s- reading for the Ancient Chinese *l-initials occur in the Chien-yang 建陽, Chien-ou 建甌, Shao-wu 邵武, and Yung-an 永安 dialects. In total, there are nineteen words:

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Mei and Norman reconstructed an *lh- for these words in Proto-Min, and suggested that these words might be reflexes of Archaic Chinese consonant clusters *Bl-, *Dl-, *Gl- and so on. Their speculation might be correct, but there is one unsolved difficulty. In Shao-wu, all these words belong to the upper register rather than to the lower register as they do in the other dialects. This is the main reason that Mei and Norman reconstructed *lh for them. However, in the process of phonetic change from Archaic Chinese *Bl-, *Dl... to Proto-Min *lh- and to the modern dialects s- or l-, we do not know at what stage the tones were generated. If there were tones in Archaic Chinese, the upper register of these words should not have been generated in the dialect in which *Bl- changed to *lh-. Likewise, if there were tones in Proto-Min, the lower register of these words should not have been generated in the dialects in which *lh- changed to l-. We realize that devoicing of the initials in the Chinese dialects is very common. Under such circumstances, the tones always keep the lower register unless it merges with an upper one. My own study (Ting 1981) shows that there are four pitch-tones in Archaic Chinese. Therefore, the problem remains unsolved.

Aside from this problem, if the theory of Mei and Norman holds good, we may want to adopt the viewpoint of Coblin (1978). He concludes that the consonant clusters of Archaic Chinese still persisted in the Eastern Han period, but were lost in the Wei-Chin time. Thus, the Min dialects might have derived from Archaic Chinese in the Eastern Han period.

7) Two groups of words of the Ancient *Yu* 尤 rime are pronounced differently in the Min dialects⁴

The Ancient *Yu* 尤 rime derived from two Archaic rime categories, namely, *Chih* 之 and *Yu* 幽. Some words from the *Chih* 之 category shifted to the *Yu* 幽 category in the Western Han. I (Ting 1975: 253) set up an optional rule to account for this change: ə → o/KWj_g, which applied only to certain words as 牛, 久, and 舊. These words all had

4. Thanks are due to Professor E. G. Pulleyblank who brought this phenomenon to my attention.

labiovelar initials and the medial -j- which provided the conditions for the change. In the Min dialects, these words (Group I) have special readings different from the words which originally belonged to the Archaic *Yu* 幽 category (Group II). This fact might reflect a phenomenon of Archaic Chinese.

Groups	Characters & glosses	Arch. C.	Anc. C.	Amoy	Fu-chou	Ch'ao-chou
I	牛 "cattle"	ngwjæg	njəu	ɛgu	ɛŋu	ɛgu
	久 "long"	kwjæg	kjəu	ɕku	ɕkieu ⁵	ɕku
II	九 "nine"	kjæg	kjəu	ɕkau	ɕkau	ɕkau
.....						
II	韭 "leek"	kjæg	kjəu	ɕku	ɕkieu	ɕku
I	舊 "old"	gwjæg	gjəu	ku ²	ku ²⁶	ku ²
II	舅 "uncle"	gjæg	gjəu	ku ²	kieu ²	ɕku

It seems in the Min dialects that 牛 and 久 with the final -u and 九 with final -au preserve the distinction between Groups I and II. However, as shown in the table, there is a Group II word 韭, homophonous to 九 in Archaic and Ancient Chinese, which does not show the same tendency. On the contrary, it is pronounced ɕku, identical with the Group I word 久. Furthermore, compare the next two words 舊 and 舅 in the table. Although they belonged to different groups, these two words are pronounced with the same final -u as well. In this case we are unable to draw any conclusion as to the derivation time of colloquial Min.

8) Some words of Ancient Chinese *Yü* 魚 and *Yü* 虞 rimes are pronounced differently in the Min dialects (Tung 1960:1041)

In the *Ch'ieh-yun*, the *Yü* 魚 (*-jwo) and the *Yü* 虞 (*-ju) rimes are different. But none of the modern dialects keeps these rimes distinct except the Min dialects. For example:

Characters & glosses	Arch. C.	Anc. C.	Amoy	Fu-chou	Ch'ao-chou
鼠 "mouse"	sthjag	śjwo	ɕts'i	ɕts'y	ɕts'ə

5. I believe that this reading and the following ones of Fu-chou with the final -ieu represent a sort of literary pronunciation.

6. In Fu-chou, the final -u is phonetically pronounced -ou when the word belongs to the *Ch'ü-sheng*.

去 “to go”	khjag	khjwo	k'i ²	k'ɔ ²	k'ə ²
魚 “fish”	ngjag	njwo	ɿhi	ɿny	ɿhə
.....					
斧 “ax”	pjag	pju	ɿpə	ɿp'uo	ɿpou
雨 “rain”	gwjag	ju	hə ²	ɿy	ɿhou
柱 “pillar”	ɖrjug	dju	t'iau ²	t'ieu ²	ɿt'iau
鬚 “beard”	sjug	sju	ɿts'iu	ɿts'iu	ɿts'iu

Comparatively speaking, it is quite clear that the *Yü* 魚 rime words have some sort of front vowels and the *Yü* 虞 rime words have rather back ones. Words of the latter *Yü* 虞 rime even reflect two different sources, in which one goes back to the Archaic *Yü* 魚 category and the other to the *Hou* 侯 category. (Cf. Yang 1982:271). Since the distinction between the *Yü* 魚 and the *Yü* 虞 rimes was always preserved in one way or another before (and during) Ancient Chinese, the fact that the Min dialects today still preserve a distinction does not help us to determine the derivation time of colloquial Min.

- 9) Some words of the Ancient Chinese *chih* 支 rime are pronounced with the final -ia in the Min dialects.

This phenomenon only covers a few words which originally belonged to the *ke* 歌 category of Archaic Chinese and later belonged to the Ancient Chinese *chih* 支 rime.

Characters & glosses	Arc. C.	Anc. C.	Amoy	Fu-chou	Ch'ao-chou
騎 “to ride”	gjar	gjě	ɿk'ia	ɿk'ie	ɿk'ia
倚 “to stand”	gjar	gjě	k'ia ²	k'ie ²	ɿk'ia
寄 “to mail”	kjar	kjě	kia ²	kie ²	kia ²
蟻 “ant”	ngjar	njě	hia ²	ɲie ²	ɿhia

The finals of these readings in the Min dialects can be easily reconstructed as *-ia, which changed to -ie in Fu-chou as a secondary development by raising the vowel -a to -e after -i-. According to the development of rime categories, the final -jar of Archaic Chinese was preserved in the Western Han period, but shifted to -jei in the Eastern Han period (Cf. Lo and Chou 1958: 26, Ting 1975: 239, 253-254). After

7. There is also a literary reading for this word in Fu-chou, i.e., k'y², which is phonetically pronounced -æy.

that, the final of the *chih* 支 rime shifted to a high front vowel or to apical vowels and subsequently there was no trace of -ia at all in the history of Chinese phonology. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the -ia final of these words approximately preserved the final -jar of the Western Han period after velar initials by dropping the final -r.

In addition to phonological evidence, lexical evidence has also been used in determining the derivation time of the Min dialects. In Norman's article (1979) mentioned above, he gave the triple readings of 石, 席 in Amoy and 懸 in Fu-chou as follows:

	1	2	3
石:	tsioʔ	siaʔ	sik
席:	ts'ioʔ	siaʔ	sik
懸:	keiŋ	heŋ	hieŋ

The triple readings represent three lexical strata, which were introduced into the Min area during the Han dynasty, the late Southern Dynasties and the late T'ang dynasty respectively. Norman's claim is based on previous studies on the immigration history of the Min area (Cf. Yüan 1960: 240). But, how which immigration waves are paired with which readings remains to be explained.

I think it is difficult to use lexical items to determine the derivation time of any dialect. There are three conditions that eligible lexical items should fulfil. First, the pronunciation of a lexical item has to coincide completely with the reading of the correspondent character. Second, the lexical item has to be unique in the dialect concerned. And third, the time of occurrence of these lexical items in Chinese literature must be certain. The first two conditions can be discharged without difficulty, but the last one is almost impossible to fulfil. Because on the one hand, the literature we can see today is very limited. Even within this limited amount, we can hardly check all the books. And on the other hand, the fact that the lexical items do not occur in literature of a certain period does not mean that they did not exist in that time. For instance:

The Amoy term 'ts'ĩ ɿmĩ', corresponding to Fu-chou 'ts'aŋ ɿmaŋ', means 'blind' or 'unable to see' and is used in the Min dialects only. In his *T'ai-wan Yü-tien* 臺灣語典, Lien Heng suggested two characters 青盲 for this term, which was used in the *Hou-Han Shu*. The sentence reads:

“是時健爲任永，業同郡馮信，……………皆託青盲以避世難。”⁸ (At that time Jen Yung of the Chien-wei county, Li Yeh and his fellow-countryman Feng Hsin all pretended to become blind in order to run away from trouble.) Here the meaning of 青盲 is very clear. It seems that this term could be used to prove that the Min dialects had branched out in the Eastern Han period. (cf. Yüan 1960: 301, Lin 1980:113). But, in a T'ang commentary to the Book of Odes by K'ung Yin-ta (574-648), he said:” 故知有眸子而無見曰矇，卽今之青盲者也。” (So we know that the character 矇 means one who has eyes but unable to see. It has the same meaning as the term 青盲 used nowadays.) Since the term 青盲 still existed in the T'ang time, we cannot use it to prove that the Min dialects derived from the Chinese language in the Eastern Han period. If we did not find this term in the T'ang commentary, we might make the wrong conclusion. Even if this term did not occur in the commentary, we still could not prove that it was not used in the language then. Lexical items thus do not play a decisive role in determining the derivation time of any dialect.

In conclusion, I prefer to use phonological evidence rather than lexical evidence in tracing the derivation time of the Min dialects. As I stated above, among nine characteristics of the Min dialects, the -ia final of several words is the most reliable one for proving that the Min dialects probably derived from the main stream of the Chinese language during the transition stage between the Western and the Eastern Han dynasties. The s- reading of some Ancient Chinese *l- words in the Northern Min dialects is also helpful towards supporting this viewpoint.

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閩語白話音分支時代考

丁 邦 新

(摘 要)

在古音研究的領域裡，漢語方音的資料主要用於隋唐中古音的討論，很少作為擬測周秦上古音的印證。因為各大方言從古漢語方音歧出的時間大致都在中古音之後，方言中語音變化的種種現象大致都能利用中古音系來解釋。惟一的例外是閩語，由於近年來的研究，使人確信閩語的白話音在中古音之前已經從古漢語中分出來了，很可能在漢代前後，而確切的時間因為證據不足而不敢說定。

在這篇文章裡，從閩語白話音的系統着眼，提出以下九點音韻上的特殊現象加以檢討：

一、輕重唇不分

二、舌頭舌上不分

三、齒頭正齒不分

四、古全濁塞音多讀全清

五、部分疑母字讀h-

六、部分來母字讀s-

七、尤韻字分兩讀

八、魚虞兩韻字讀音不同

九、歌部支韻字讀-ia

結論認為前面八點儘管情形特殊，對斷代並無顯著的幫助。只有最後一條，閩語中少數幾個支韻字如騎、寄、蟻等，上古屬歌部，今音的韻母都讀-ia，表現的正是西漢和東漢之交的現象。在漢語史上，漢代以後支韻字的元音就漸漸前移，讀為高元音i或舌尖元音，沒有再出現讀-ia的情形。可見閩語白話音極可能是在西漢末年、東漢初年從古漢語方言而出的。

至於根據詞彙的演變來推斷時代，很難有可信的結果。因為某方言特有的詞彙在文獻中出現的時代難以肯定，現有的文獻無法盡查，我們所見到的極有限；同時文獻中沒有的詞彙並不代表語言中就不存在。所以用音韻系統跟漢語史的現象來比較還是較為可靠。